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C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000006

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BABIL OFFICIALS ASK NAJAF SCIRI BOSS TO HELP OUST BABIL POLICE CHIEF

REF: HILLAH 0353 2005

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Members of the Babil Provincial Council (PC) met January 3 with the Najaf head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) to secure the SCIRI leader's help in ousting the Iraqi Police (IP) chief of Babil Province. Recent efforts by religious party-affiliated Babil officials to oust the chief stem from his refusal to hire 1,350 new police officer candidates hand-picked by provincial officials. End summary.

12. (C) Babil Provincial Council member Qassem Hamoud Abed led a small delegation that met January 3 to discuss the ouster of the Babil Police Chief with Shaykh Sadr Al-Deen Al-QubANJI, the Najaf head of SCIRI and one of the most senior SCIRI officials nationwide, according to Babil IP contacts. Sources in Al-QubANJI's office confirmed the meeting, which took place in Al-QubANJI's home, and its content, to SET Najaf local staff. The Babil delegation included Aboud, who is affiliated with SCIRI, another unidentified Babil PC member, and Imad Al-Jabouri, an American citizen of Iraqi origin who is affiliated with the Dawa Party, is close to the SCIRI-affiliated Babil Governor, and serves as a self-described "informal security advisor" to the provincial government. According to REO Al-Hillah local staff and local contacts, both Abed and Al-Jabouri are rumored to have close ties to Iranian intelligence services.

13. (C) Al-QubANJI reportedly promised the Babil delegation that he would discuss the issue of the police chief's removal with "ministerial authorities" in Baghdad, and that he would support their position. The cleric maintained that the entire national government must be investigated to insure that it is free of Baathists. He added that the interference of Coalition Forces in the Iraqi security services, and the Coalition release Baathists from prison, had compromised Iraqi security and hindered the efforts of the Iraqis to fight the insurgency.

14. (C) Rumors have swirled regarding the intention of Babil Governor Salem Saleh Mehdi Al-Muslimawi and the Provincial Council to oust the police chief, General Qais Hamza Aboud Al-Mamouri, since the chief resisted appointing 1,410 new police officers hand-selected by the Governor and PC members in late November 2005 (refTel.) Al-Mamouri, an independent, told REO staff that he fears that the new police officer candidates, added to his existing force of about 6,000 officers, would serve as a private religious militia within the police and compromise his force's effectiveness and integrity.

15. (C) Al-Mamouri has met several times in the last month with the Regional Coordinator (RC) and REO staff regarding threats to his job. During this time, the Governor has reportedly petitioned Interior Minister Bayan Jabr to remove the chief, and Babil government contacts have suggested that the PC is considering action on the chief's removal. General Mamouri told the RC on January 5 that the PC had informed the Ministry of Interior of their intention to hold such a vote. (Note: According to Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) regulations still in effect, provincial councils must inform the Ministry of Interior of their intention to vote on dismissing the provincial police chief before this action can be taken. End note.) Such a vote would likely pass, given SCIRI's dominance of the Babil PC. If the vote does pass, the Interior Minister must approve the action for the dismissal to take effect.

16. (C) Al-Mamouri has told REO staff that he will hire any of the 1,410 hand-picked new candidates that qualify based on the national standard for IP officers, which includes a reading and writing requirement. Of some 300 applications he has received from the new candidates willing to submit their papers, Al-Mamouri said, only 20 have had the necessary qualifications.

17. (C) Comment: Having been thus far unable to force the chief to hire the new officers or remove him from power on their own or by petitioning Baghdad, Babil officials appear to be pursuing other means. That the Babil officials are apparently willing to court the support of a senior SCIRI official from outside the province to further pressure Baghdad authorities, and that the official, Al-QubANJI, appears willing to do so, are equally

troubling for the prospects of an independent Babil Police Chief
and Police Force. End comment.

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